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SUBJECT: EU MONITORS ARRIVE IN GEORGIA, PREPARE TO DEPLOY

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C/NF) Summary and comment. At least 200 monitors will be in Georgia by September 30 and will start work October 1. The headquarters will be in Tbilisi, with satellite offices in Poti (30-40 observers), Zugdidi and Gori (70 monitors each) and a 25-member rapid-reaction force based in Tbilisi. This unarmed civilian mission considers its mandate to be "country-wide," to include Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and will seek access to those regions. The observers will wear "EU-blue" berets and armbands, have the same diplomatic status as OSCE observers, and maintain primary contact with the Georgian Interior Ministry. Although the EU has done impressive work to establish a mission of this magnitude by the October 1 deadline, many questions remain about the scope of the mission's activities and its coordination with the other monitoring missions (UNOMIG and OSCE) on the ground. The mission will have achieved a major goal if Russian forces do depart position in Georgia proper by October 10 as pledged in the Sarkozy-Medvedev plan, and its presence can send an important political message to the international community and investors, but we will need to manage international perceptions carefully if the EU monitors are blocked from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. End summary and comment.

THE EU MISSION: NUTS AND BOLTS

12. (C/NF) A newly arrived political advisor, one of three for the new EU mission, provided post with an update on the deployment of the mission on September 29. In accordance with the September 8 Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement, 22 of 27 EU member states have provided more than 200 monitors, along with over 100 support staff. The monitors began arriving over the past few days and will all be on the ground by September 30, to start monitoring activities October 1. The mission headquarters will be in Tbilisi; currently co-located with the OSCE headquarters, the EU mission is searching for a permanent building. The monitors who have already arrived are currently receiving training at a resort in Batalevi, near Dusheti, but will deploy to their Poti, Zugdidi and Gori postings by October 1. EU staff are still working on finding them suitable accommodations. The monitors will have the same diplomatic status as OSCE monitors; they will have no standard uniform, but will wear "EU-blue" berets and armbands.

13. (C/NF) A detailed deployment plan has not yet been established, but the monitors will cover sections of Georgia corresponding to their geographic location. The 25-member rapid reaction force will be based in Tbilisi but will be ready to travel to any location in the country as needed. The mission considers its mandate "country-wide" and intends to "insist" on access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a civilian, unarmed mission, the monitors will not be in a position to apply anything but diplomatic pressure to gain that access, but mission staff told post the monitors would persistently seek access even if refused.

14. (C/NF) EU staff and Interior Ministry sources both told post the Ministry would be the mission's primary government

contact, although Foreign Ministry sources suggested other agencies would be involved as well, including the Ministry for Reintegration. The Interior Ministry expressed some concern that the monitors would be relying heavily on Georgian police for security, because their only protection would be armored vehicles. At a September 25 German Embassy-hosted meeting with EU mission head Ambassador Haber, the Ambassador was impressed by Haber's experience in the region and willingness to work closely with his colleagues on the ground here in Tbilisi. Haber also promised to be accessible to us and to other missions in Tbilisi in providing information about observer activities on the ground and reports of specific incidents.

DEPLOYMENT AND COORDINATION PLAN STILL HAZY

15. (C/NF) OSCE sources suggested to post that there has not been much coordination of the EU mission's activities with the two other international monitoring missions in Georgia (the OSCE itself and UNOMIG). The OSCE briefed elements of the EU mission on September 27 about their own activities, and it seemed to the OSCE that the EU still had some work to do in establishing a plan of its own, not to mention coordinating that plan with others. The Interior Ministry was also unsure about what the EU's day-to-day activities would be. The EU itself plans a briefing for the diplomatic community on October 2 and may have more detailed information at that time. The Interior Ministry expressed the hope that the mission would provide extra support for the areas near the Enguri Dam and immediately south of Tskhinvali, because it is concerned about Russian intentions regarding the power generated by the dam and about the potential for Russian

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mischievous south of South Ossetia. Although UNOMIG and OSCE monitors already cover these areas to some extent, the Ministry seemed to think that an expanded international presence in those particular areas would be very helpful.

COMMENT: THE MONITORS WILL NEED MONITORING

16. (C/NF) The major question facing the EU mission is whether it will gain access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although the details of the mission's day-to-day routine will eventually be worked out, its ability to gather information about the situation throughout Georgia will clearly depend on its physical access. If the EU mission is ultimately not able to enter Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it will be extremely important to coordinate closely with UNOMIG and the OSCE. This issue will become more important if and when the OSCE deploys 80 additional monitors. In the long run, however, having 200 additional pairs of eyes on the ground will probably reduce the likelihood of provocative incidents along the administrative boundaries and any escalation from incidents that do occur.

17. (C/NF) The mission's rapid deployment may indeed achieve the withdrawal of Russian forces from undisputed Georgian territory, which itself would be an important accomplishment.

In addition, as the Interior Ministry pointed out, its presence in Georgia might help reassure the international community, and investors in particular, that Georgia is getting back to a normal, stable state. Nevertheless, if the mission's 200 monitors find themselves barred from crossing the two de facto borders with no opportunity to enter, we will need to continue to reinforce the message -- and to encourage our European colleagues to do the same -- that the lack of access reflects Russian intransigence, not a fundamentally changed situation on the ground. End comment.

TEFFT